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35-2734

STAT

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Office of Inspector General

SUBJECT : Status of Secretaries

REFERENCES : a. Memo to D/Pers fr Adse dtd 20 Oct 75, subj:  
Upgrading Secretarial Salaries  
b. Memo to D/Pers fr Adse dtd 3 Nov 75, same  
subject

1. From the references it is apparent that you are interested in the larger problem that pertains to the status and utilization of secretaries. Accordingly, before responding to the specific points you have raised, I will share with you an earlier study that pertains to the larger problem (attached).

2. It is the position of the Office of Personnel that line management has a clear responsibility to allocate work duties and to utilize personnel productively. When this has not been done, personnel problems ensue that cannot be resolved by partial remedies. Among the partial remedies I would include such suggestions as the formation of a senior secretary "professional" elite and the effort to increase salaries even if they are not commensurate with responsibilities and duties.

3. Questions of status and job satisfaction are resolved most satisfactorily by the creation of a good match between the worker and the job to be done. There are many times when this is not easy, such as when a senior secretary returns from overseas, but the solution to that problem does not lie in increasing her grade while overseas. The problem does not pertain to the senior secretary alone, for the most junior clerk typist may question the many hours she does not spend productively, because no work is at hand, and the odd-ball assignments she does receive.

4. It would seem that there are several steps that can be taken by the Career Services within present authorities that would address the problem:

- a. Pass the word about what is expected:
  - (1) To perform well on the present job.
  - (2) To qualify for advancement within the occupation.
  - (3) To qualify for a more challenging occupation.

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b. Reward supervisors and managers for finding ways to make secretarial/clerical work more interesting and more productive.

c. Where possible, find ways to increase responsibilities and remuneration for qualified employees.

d. Keep in touch. Find ways to surface employee ideas about making jobs more challenging.

e. Use QSI's to reward outstanding performance or special efforts to improve one's qualifications.

f. Develop seminars to exchange the experiences of our own employees about ways to make jobs more interesting and challenging.

g. Help employees who are overqualified for their present jobs to find advancement, if possible, through counseling.

5. Some steps should not be taken; we should not:

a. Destroy the link between pay and responsibility.

b. Dilute the meaning of "professional."

c. Take measures that provide special benefits to a small minority.

d. Ignore demand and supply considerations on the labor market.

e. Move people into professional ranks without establishing that they are qualified to compete for further advancement.

6. The proposal to establish an Agency-wide secretarial career service, when it was raised, was limited to senior secretaries on the basis that a broader inclusion would be too difficult to administer. From our viewpoint it had two serious deficiencies:

a. It created an organizational gap between the secretarial career service and those managers who could do most to redress the underlying problems.

b. It did not address the equally valid problems of the larger number of secretaries and clericals; it could be considered an "elitist" solution.

When brought to the Management Committee, that body agreed that the responsibility lay with the Career Services, as placed by the Personnel Approaches Study Group report approved by the Management Committee.

7. More recently on 17 November the Management Committee considered a proposal to upgrade senior secretarial jobs but did not overturn the finding of PMCD that only a minority of the positions examined even warranted the present grade (see attachment). The Committee endorsed our position that the Career Services are responsible for improvement of utilization, progression, recognition, career management and development of secretaries.

8. With respect to seminars and conferences, as a means of improving status of secretaries, the responsibility for funding and selecting attendees rests with the Deputies. The Office of Personnel has suggested previously that each Career Service might benefit from a secretarial advisory panel that would provide suggestions relating to the improvement of the status and utilization of secretaries.

9. The Plans Staff has discussed the training aspect with representatives of the Office of Training, who noted the courses and seminars presently available to secretaries. They also observe that many excellent courses are offered at nearby community colleges. Any Deputy who wishes to make a concerted approach to improve the secretarial and administrative skills of his secretarial resources would find the training facilities available. Indeed, the Office of Training is currently soliciting suggestions for secretarial training.

10. Since your primary concern is with status of secretaries, one possibility would be seminars by the Career Services featuring their own secretaries. This would provide both recognition and training.

11. Compared to the other training resources, conferences in other cities represent a relatively expensive form of training and recognition. Within reasonable limits, each Deputy may wish to designate some funds for this purpose so that selected secretaries may receive recognition in this way. Your memo does not identify the possible benefits that might accrue to the Agency from such sponsorship, and the costs and benefits would have to be assessed by the Deputy Directors concerned. Would the designation of a few secretaries to attend create disgruntlement among a larger number? Would there indeed be a payoff in terms of motivation and productivity? The answers to these questions are certainly relevant to determination of how much funding is desirable.

12. With respect to your suggestion about recognizing the certification of "Certified Professional Secretary," I have referred the matter to our Position Management and Compensation Division. They confirm that the government qualifications standard does admit possession of the CPS as a factor for the award of bonuses for rating purposes. Hence it could be a factor in winning assignment for a secretary or even for granting her a Quality Step Increase.

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It is not evident that it should be a basis for promotion in and of itself without consideration of the position occupied. It is conceivable that some positions be designated as requiring a CPS, but that would raise the question of the relevancy of the CPS, which examines on the basis of many topics not immediately relevant to much of the Agency's work. Four out of the six test areas relate directly to the business environment.

13. The key to upgrading secretarial salaries would appear to lie in upgrading secretarial responsibilities through delegation of greater responsibility for administration of offices or conferring greater staff and decision-related responsibilities. Such delegation would also require respecification of job qualifications and standards so that those who hold the positions would be adequate to the job. The responsibility for such upgrade lies with management at Directorate and component levels.

F. W. M. Janney  
Director of Personnel

Att  
As Stated

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